CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 7 APRIL 1995 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF A DECLARATION BY FRANCE ON SECURITY ASSURANCES

I would be grateful if you would kindly register this declaration as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distribute it to all the delegations of member States and States with observer status.

(Signed) G. ERRERA
Permanent Representative of France
to the Conference on Disarmament

The question of security assurances given by the nuclear Powers to non-nuclear States is a major issue for my delegation, firstly because it corresponds to a real expectation on the part of the non-nuclear countries, particularly those which, in signing the NPT, have renounced the goal of acquiring atomic weapons, secondly because our special responsibilities as a nuclear Power are at stake, and lastly because this issue has taken on new significance since the end of the cold war, as awareness has grown of the threat posed to all by the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

It is in order to respond to this expectation, to shoulder its responsibilities and make a contribution to efforts to combat the proliferation of nuclear weapons, that France has decided to adopt the following measures.

First, it wishes to clarify and reaffirm the negative security assurances it gave in 1982. Specifically, France reaffirms that it will not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT, except in the case of an invasion or any other attack on it, its territory, its armed forces or other troops, its allies or a State towards which it has a security commitment, carried out or sustained by such a State, in alliance or association with a nuclear-weapon State.

In our view it is natural that the beneficiaries of these assurances should be the signatories to the NPT - that is, the vast majority of the countries of the world - since they have entered into a formal commitment to non-proliferation.

In response to the requests made by a large number of countries, France has also sought to harmonize the content of its negative assurances to the maximum extent possible with those of the other nuclear Powers. We are happy that this effort has succeeded. The declarations concerning negative security assurances made by France, the United States, Russia and the United Kingdom, are now practically identical.

Secondly, France has decided for the first time to give positive security assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT. This decision became both possible and desirable following France's accession to the NPT. Consequently, France considers that any act of aggression accompanied by the use of nuclear weapons would threaten international peace and security. France recognizes that it is legitimate for the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT to be assured that the international community, and first and foremost the United Nations Security Council, would react immediately in accordance with the obligations under the Charter in the event that they were victims of or threatened with aggression using nuclear weapons.

Bearing these considerations in mind, France makes the following declaration:

France, as a permanent member of the Security Council, undertakes in the event of aggression involving the use of nuclear weapons or the threat of such aggression against a non-nuclear-weapon State party to the NPT to bring the matter before the Security Council without delay and to work within the

Council to ensure that the Council takes immediate steps to provide the requisite assistance, in accordance with the Charter, to a State that is the victim of an act of aggression or the threat thereof.

France reaffirms in particular the inherent right, recognized under Article 51 of the Charter, of individual and collective self-defence if an armed attack, including a nuclear attack, occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.

In this field too we welcome the fact that the content of these positive assurances was the subject of close consultation with the other nuclear Powers.

Thirdly, together with the four other nuclear Powers, France has decided to put before the United Nations Security Council a draft resolution which is pathbreaking in many respects, and which reflects our resolve to respond to the expectations of the international community in a comprehensive, collective and concrete manner. Comprehensive, because for the first time, a draft resolution encompasses both negative assurances and positive assurances. Collective, because the five nuclear Powers are co-sponsoring such a resolution for the first time. Concrete, because for the first time a Security Council resolution spells out the steps that the Security Council might take in the event of aggression, in particular as regards dispute settlement, humanitarian assistance and compensation to victims.

The draft resolution formally reaffirms the need for all States parties to the NPT to respect their obligations fully. This is not a case of petitio principii, but the reiteration of a fundamental rule. The draft also emphasizes the desirability of universal accession to the NPT.

The decisions I have just announced reflect our determination to strengthen the non-proliferation regime, and especially the NPT, of which it is the keystone. It is our hope and firm conviction that the initiatives we have taken will help to achieve that end.